

CHAPTER 3. CHILDREN IN LICENSED CARE

Introduction

Licensing regulations for child care centers and family homes are determined by state law and administrative rules. In evaluating each licensed facility, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) examines: (1) its premises, equipment, and physical conditions; (2) the number and skills of the licensee and staff; and (3) the ages and characteristics of the children in care. The regulations for family home providers differ slightly from those for child care centers.

DSHS child care regulations vary according to the ages of the children in care. For example, in child care centers one adult may care for up to either four infants or fifteen school-age children. Since younger children require more adult supervision than older children, most providers charge more for the care of younger children. In family homes, the number of children under two years old is strictly limited and the number of children under two years old that a provider serves affects the total number of children that he or she can serve.

For this report we categorized children into discrete age groups in accordance with the definitions DSHS uses for licensing regulations in child care centers and subsidy payments. These categories are consistent with the age classifications used by many child care providers:

- Infants, under 12 months old;
- Toddlers, from 12 to 29 months old;
- Preschoolers, from 30 months up to entry into kindergarten; and
- School-age children, from entry into kindergarten to 12 years.

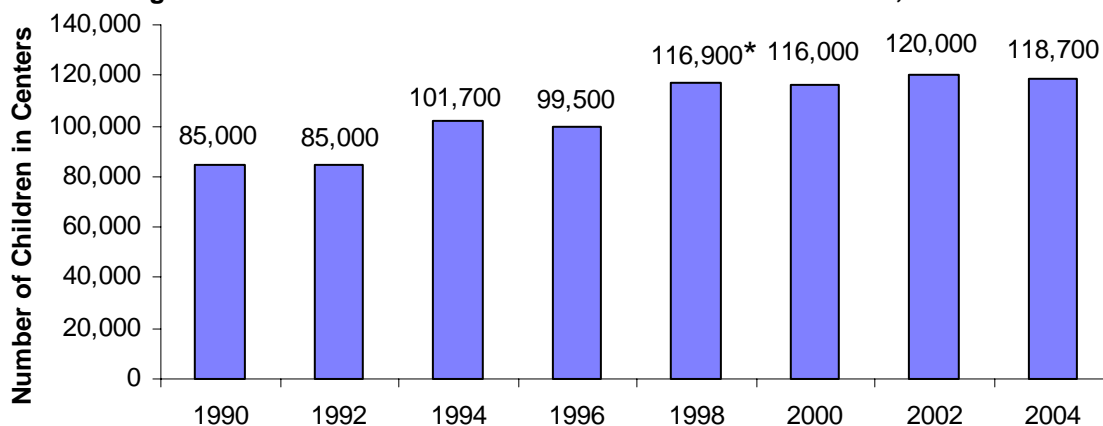
In addition to the age of the child, most providers charge more on a monthly basis for children in full-time care than for children in part-time care. But part-time care often costs more per hour than full-time care. In September 1998, the DSHS subsidy program changed its definition of full-time from 30 to 25 hours. Since some providers changed their threshold for full-time to bring it into line with the new DSHS definition, center providers were allowed in the 2004 survey to include children in care for 25 to 30 hours a week in their count of full-time children.

Child Care Centers

Number of Children in Care, Capacity, and Vacancies in Child Care Centers

The number of children in child care centers has grown substantially over the past fourteen years, rising 40 percent from 85,000 in 1990 to 118,700 in 2004. During the same period the total number of children under 13 in Washington State rose about 14 percent.

Figure 4. Number of Children in Licensed Child Care Centers, 1990-2004

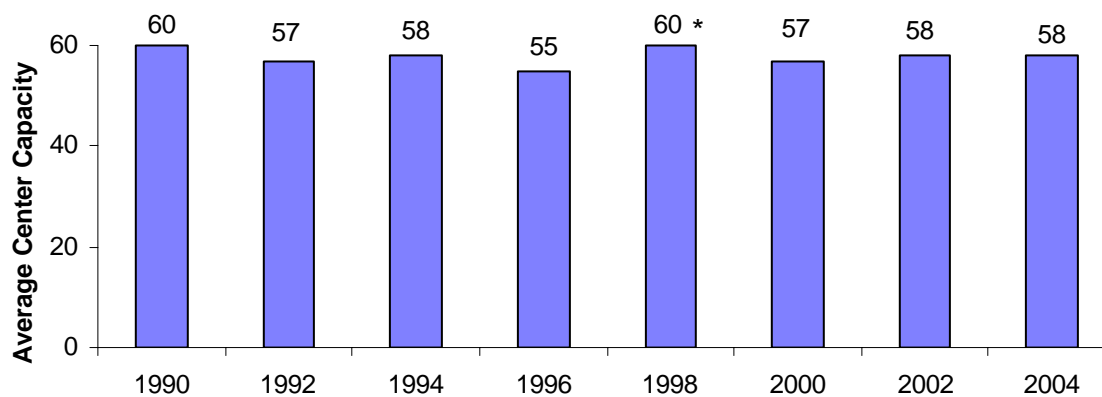


* 1998 numbers were over-estimated due to a low response rate from small centers.

Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers

The above graph shows a large increase in the number of children in centers between 1996 and 1998; however, the number of licensed centers only grew from 1,796 to 1,840 during those two years. There was concern that a low response rate by smaller child care centers on the 1998 survey had led to an over-estimation in the number of children served and that seems to have been the case (see the caution about the estimate on numbers of children in centers on page 5 of *Licensed Child Care in Washington State: 1998*). Despite the problems with the 1998 data, the data for 2000/2004 indicate an increase in the number of children in center care of approximately 18 percent from the period 1994/1996.

Figure 5. Average Capacity of Licensed Child Care Centers, 1990-2004

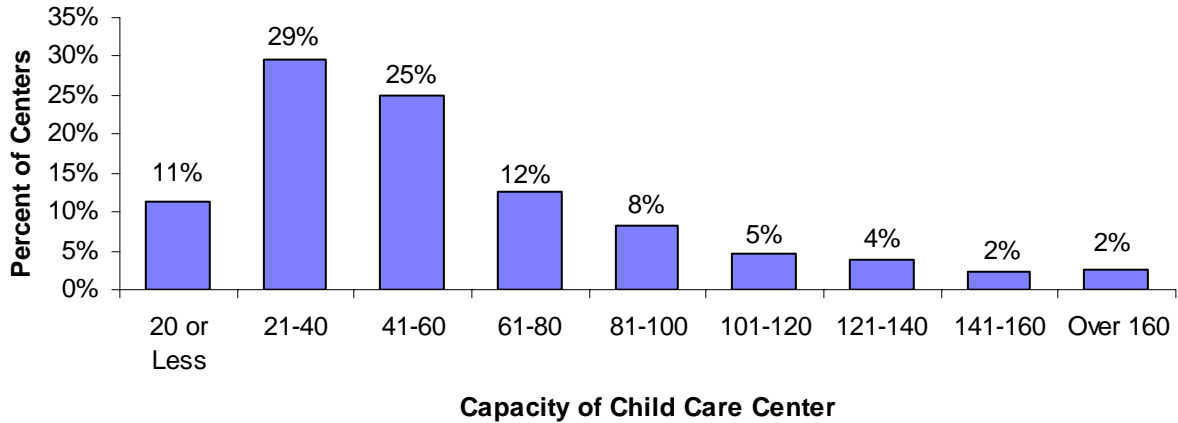


* 1998 average capacity was over-estimated due to a low response rate from small centers.

Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers

The licensed capacity of child care centers varies widely: 40 percent of centers had a capacity of 40 or fewer children while 8 percent of centers had a capacity of over 120 (see Figure 6).

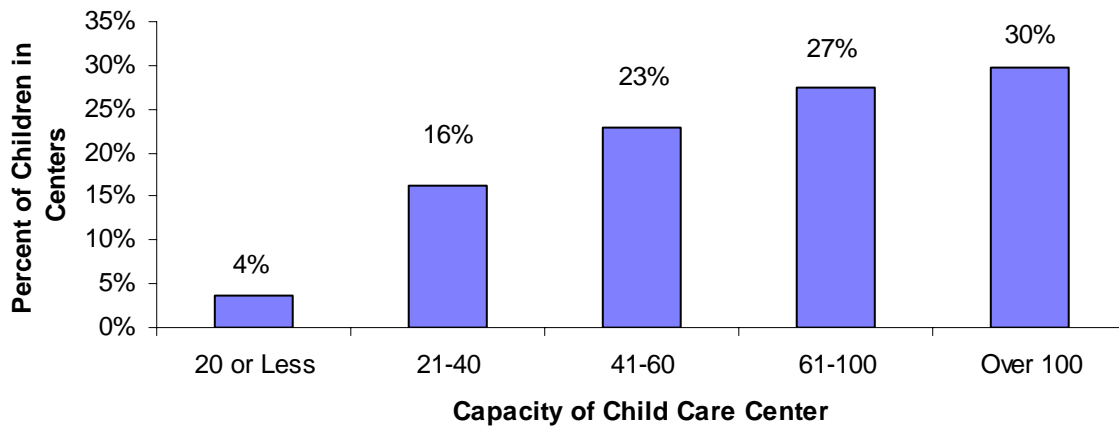
Figure 6. Distribution of Child Care Centers by Capacity, 2004



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Child Care Centers

While many centers were small, big centers served a high proportion of all children in centers. Almost one-third of all children in centers go to the 13 percent of centers with a capacity of over one hundred, while only 20 percent of children attend the 40 percent of centers with a capacity of forty or less (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Distribution of Children in Child Care Centers by Capacity, 2004

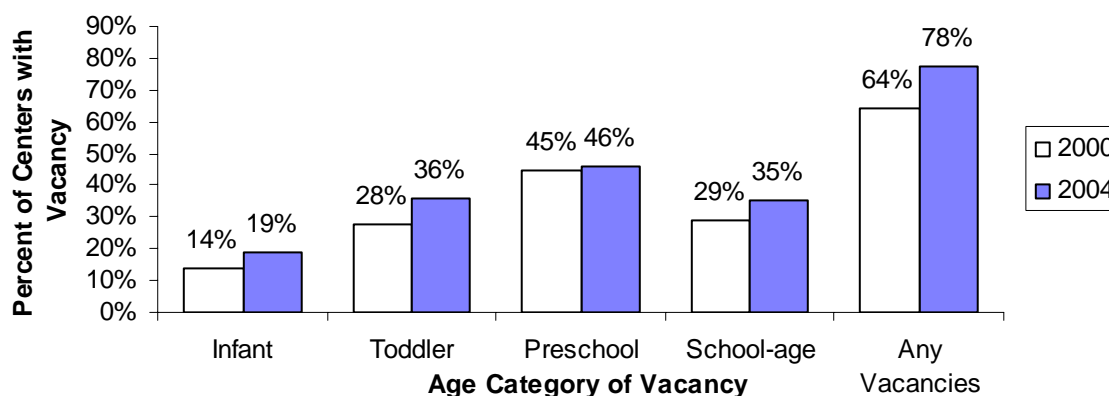


Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Child Care Centers

To estimate vacancies, providers were asked how many openings they had for children of any age. While not all facilities had vacancies, 78 percent of centers reported at least one vacancy. Centers with vacancies averaged 12.5 vacancies per center.

A vacant slot in a home or center may not be open to children of all ages. The rules limit the number of children that can be placed in a facility by age. In centers, for example, one adult may care for four infants, seven toddlers, ten preschoolers, or fifteen school-age children. Therefore, while some providers may not have sufficient staff to accept more infants, they may have vacancies for older children. The percent of centers with vacancies in various age categories for 2000 and 2004 is presented in Figure 8. Excluding school-age children, the younger the child, the less likely a center was to have an opening for that child. Looking at the changes between 2000 and 2004, many more centers had at least one vacancy in 2004 than in 2000 and there was an increase in the percent of centers with infant and toddler vacancies.

Figure 8. Percentage of Centers with Vacancies by Age Category, 2000 and 2004



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2000 and 2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers

Table 8 displays the percent of centers with vacancies for each age category by Region. According to this table, Region 2 had a smaller proportion of centers with vacancies in all age categories.

Table 8. Percentage of Centers with Vacancies by Age Category and Region, 2004

Region	Infant	Toddler	Preschool	School-age	Any Vacancies
1	22%	35%	46%	40%	82%
2	16%	30%	36%	24%	69%
3	17%	36%	47%	39%	79%
4	17%	36%	46%	31%	76%
5	21%	39%	49%	35%	79%
6	18%	35%	46%	41%	80%
All	19%	36%	46%	35%	78%

Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Child Care Centers

An alternative measure of the tightness of the child care market is the percent of total slots that are vacant, the vacancy rate. Compared to a simple measure of the proportion of centers with vacancies, the vacancy rate may give a better picture of supply and demand in the child care market. The overall vacancy rate in centers was 16 percent in 2004, a six year high. All of the

Regions have similar vacancy rates, although the data are consistent with the trends displayed in Table 8. Among centers with vacancies, the average vacancy rate was 23 percent in 2004.

Table 9. Vacancy Rate in Child Care Centers by Region, 1996 – 2004

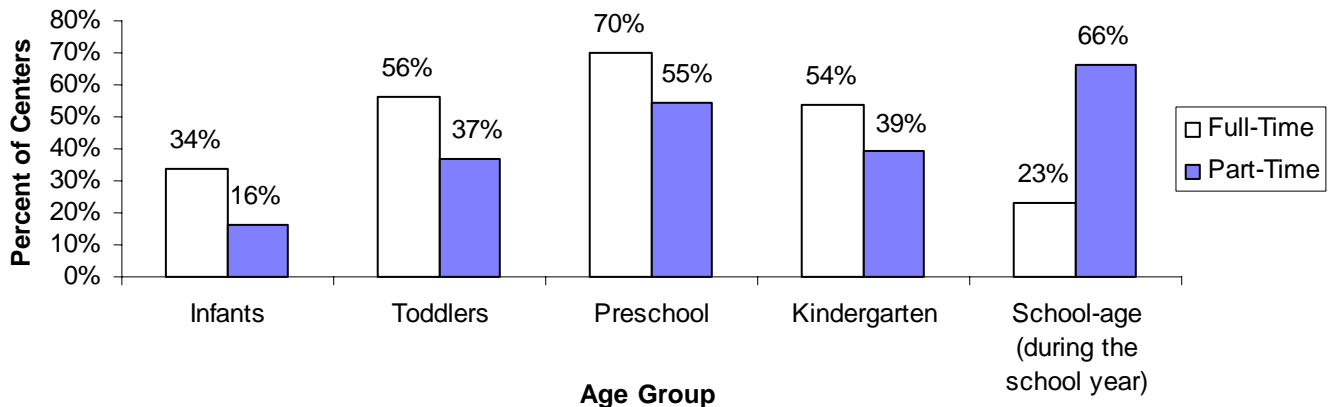
Region	Center Vacancy Rate				
	1996	1998	2000	2002	2004
1	17%	12%	13%	12%	19%
2	18%	16%	16%	13%	15%
3	19%	11%	14%	17%	17%
4	14%	11%	10%	14%	15%
5	14%	11%	13%	12%	16%
6	16%	14%	14%	17%	18%
All	16%	12%	13%	14%	16%

Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers

Full-Time and Part-Time Care in Centers by Age Category

Some centers only provide care for children of certain ages. The vast majority of centers in 2004 provided either full-time or part-time care for preschool-age children (74 percent) while only about one-third of centers provided care for infants (36 percent). Many centers did not offer both full-time and part-time options. The percentages for centers that offered full-time and part-time care for various age groups of children are shown in Figure 9. The most commonly provided care was full-time care for preschoolers with 70 percent of centers offering such care. The least common care provided by centers was that for part-time infants: 16 percent of centers offered part-time infant care.

Figure 9. Centers Providing Full-Time and Part-Time Care by Age Group, 2004

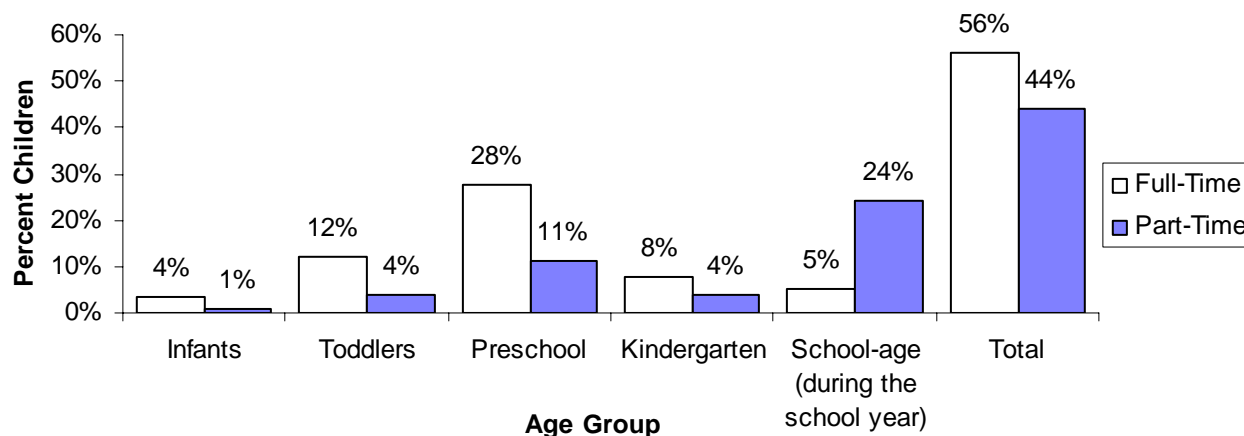


Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Child Care Centers

The estimated distribution of children in centers by age group and time-in-care is summarized in Figure 10. As mentioned earlier, centers were allowed to include children in attendance only 25 hours per week in their count of full-time children, a change from the earlier definition of full-time as 30 hours per week. That change did not appear to affect the proportion of children that

were identified as being in full-time care. In 2004, 56 percent of all children were reported to attend full-time, essentially unchanged from 2002 (57 percent). Preschoolers in full-time care constituted the largest group of children attending centers (28 percent). Infants in part-time care were the smallest group, comprising just one percent of the children in child care centers. Slightly over 40 percent of the children in center care were either in kindergarten or school-age.

Figure 10. Distribution of Children in Centers in Full-Time or Part-Time Care, 2004



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Child Care Centers

Many centers planned to provide care for school-age children during the summer (data not shown). A total of 78 percent of centers offered some care for school-age children (kindergarten or above) during the school year and about 57 percent planned to offer care for these children in the summer. Among centers planning to provide summer care for school-age children, most planned to provide full-time care (91 percent) and over half planned to provide part-time care (54 percent).

Table 10 presents estimates of the numbers of children in child care centers by DSHS Region and age group. Separate estimates were made for full-time and part-time child care. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, centers were allowed to count all children in care for 25 hours or more per week as full-time.

Table 10. Estimated Child Care Center Populations by Age and Region, 2004

Full-Time Population Estimate ^[1]

Age Group	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	All
Infant	550	470	500	1,420	670	600	4,200
Toddlers	2,100	1,460	1,870	4,370	2,350	2,000	14,160
Preschool	4,380	3,120	4,480	11,000	5,260	4,730	32,970
Kindergarten	1,620	600	1,290	2,540	1,610	1,410	9,070
School-age ^[2]	1,210	240	1,140	1,770	1,400	410	6,170
Total	9,860	5,900	9,280	21,100	11,290	9,150	66,580

Part-Time Population Estimate ^[1]

Age Group	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	All
Infant	210	60	140	340	160	130	1,040
Toddlers	540	140	610	1,550	570	1,010	4,420
Preschool	1,720	690	1,840	5,490	1,410	1,960	13,100
Kindergarten	800	340	1,030	1,210	620	630	4,640
School-age ^[3]	4,750	2,410	3,740	9,240	3,640	5,140	28,920
Total	52,120	8,030	3,630	7,360	17,830	6,400	52,120

^[1] Children in sample multiplied by a county weighting factor to estimate population.

^[2] Survey was conducted during the school year. School-age children in part-time care may switch to full-time care in the summer.

^[3] Part-time school-age total includes before- and after-school care.

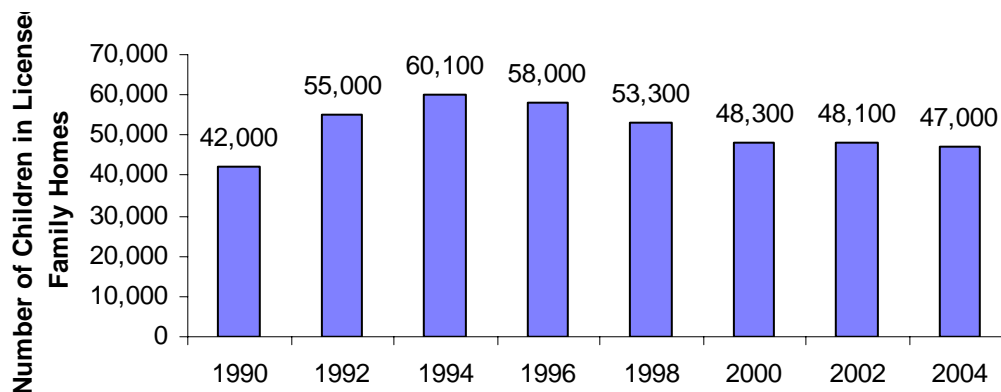
Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Child Care Centers

Family Homes

Number of Children in Care, Capacity, and Vacancies in Family Homes

Children in licensed family homes receive care in the residence of the provider. The number of children cared for in licensed family homes has been declining since 1994 (see Figure 11). For most of that time the number of licensed family home providers also declined (see Figure 2).

Figure 11. Number of Children in Licensed Family Homes, 1990-2004



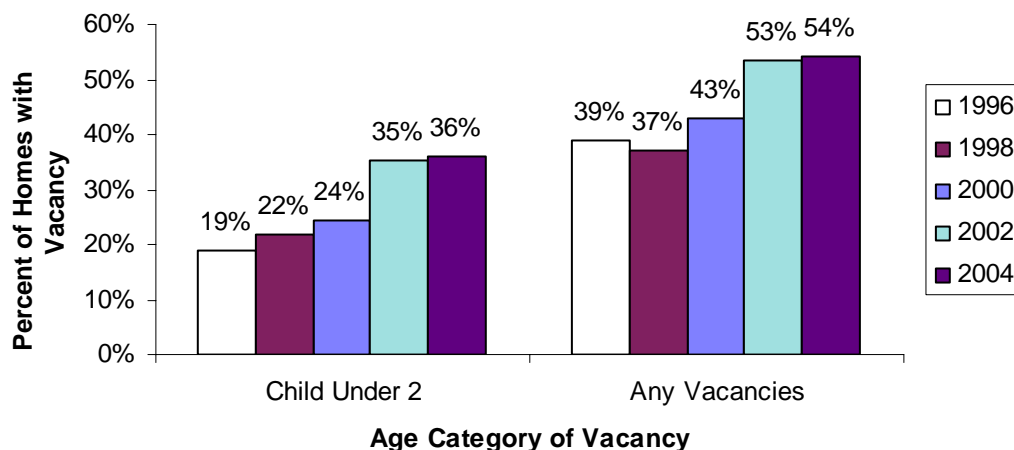
Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004 Surveys of Family Homes

Because family homes are licensed to care for twelve or fewer children at the same time, their average licensed capacity is considerably less than that of centers. The average licensed capacity for family homes in 2004 was 8.5 children per home. Licensing regulations for family homes limit the number of children under two that can be in attendance at the same time from a maximum of two children under two with one adult providing care up to a maximum of four children under two if two adults are providing care. (References to family home capacity in this report subtract the number of the providers' own children under 12 from their licensed capacity if the provider reports that they care for them during their business hours.)

To estimate vacancies, family home providers were asked how many openings they had for children of any age. On average, providers reported 1.7 vacancies per family home, up from 1.5 in 2002. In 2004, the percent of homes with at least one vacancy (54 percent), the percent of homes with vacancies for children under two (36 percent), and the vacancy rate for homes with vacancies (36 percent) were virtually unchanged from 2002. Overall the vacancy rate (number of vacancies/total capacity) in 2004 was 19.7 percent for family homes, up from 19.1 percent in 2002.

Since licensing regulations for family homes strictly limit the number of children under two years old in each licensed family home, family home providers were asked about how many vacancies they had for children under two in addition to a general question on number of vacancies. The results are displayed in Figure 12.

Figure 12. Percentage of Family Homes with Vacancies by Age Category, 1996-2004



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004 Survey of Family Homes

The information on vacancies in centers suggested that a smaller proportion of centers in Region 2 had vacancies than in other areas in the state (see Table 8). The data on vacancies in family homes is presented in Table 11. In contrast to centers, family home providers in Region 2 appear to have a somewhat higher percentage of providers with vacancies for children under 2 years old as well as vacancies for children of any ages (see Table 11).

Table 11. Family Homes with Vacancies by Region, 2004

Region	Child Under 2	Any Vacancies
1	40%	54%
2	47%	60%
3	32%	52%
4	36%	53%
5	34%	54%
6	28%	51%
All	36%	54%

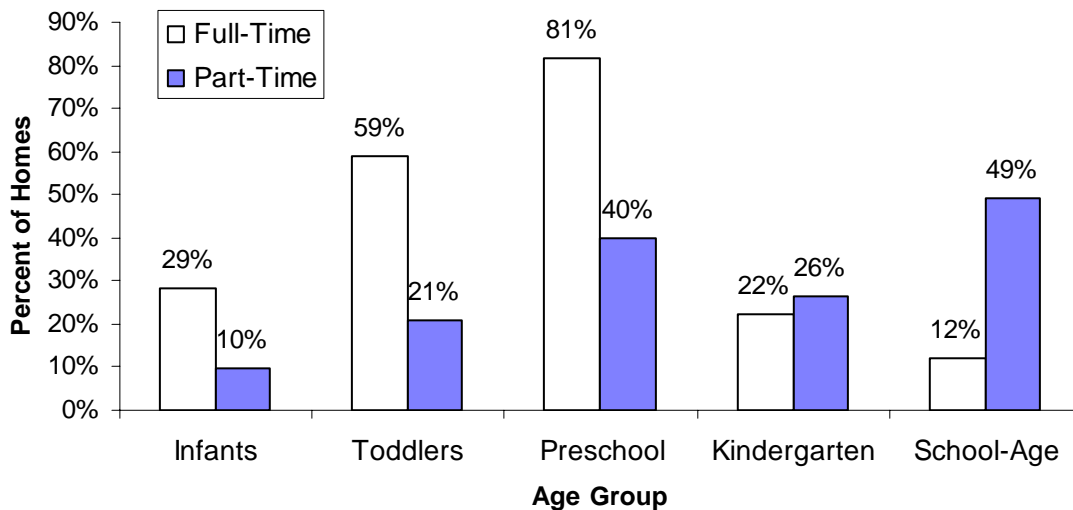
Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Family Homes

Full-Time and Part-Time Care in Family Homes by Age Category

As was the case with child care centers, the most common type of care provided by family homes was full-time child care for preschoolers. In the 2004 survey, family home providers were asked if the five and six year-olds that they cared for attended kindergarten so that five year olds that did not attend kindergarten could be included in the preschool category as is the case for centers. In past surveys, all children five years old or older were included in the school-age group for family home providers. Thirty hours per week was used as the cut-off for the definition of full-time care in family homes.

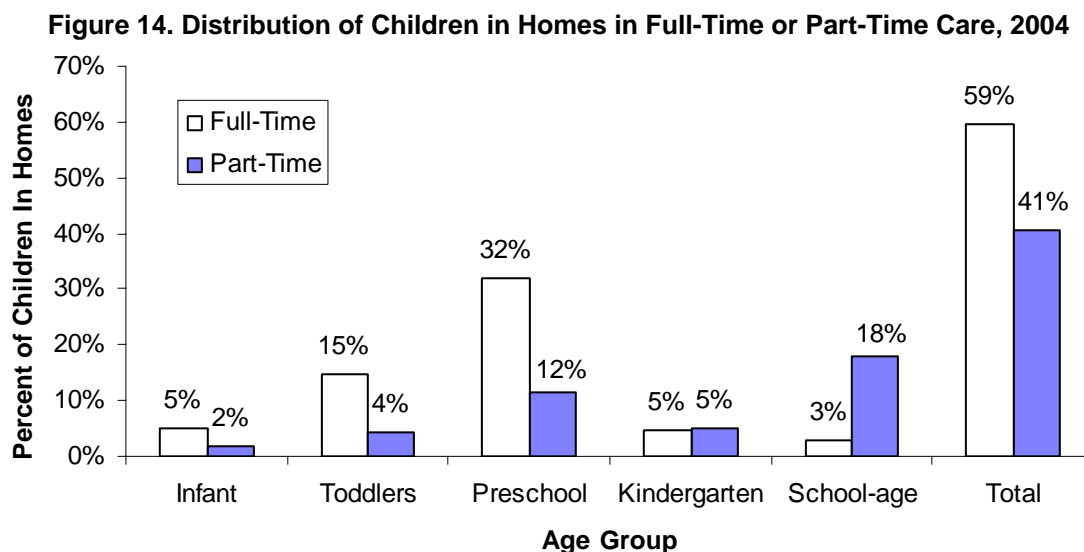
The inclusion of the question on kindergarten attendance makes the information on family homes more directly comparable to that for centers (compare Figures 9 and 13). Eighty-one percent of all family homes provided full-time care to preschoolers, higher than the 70 percent of centers providing full-time care to preschoolers. At the other extreme, only 10 percent of homes provided part-time care to infants. Figure 13 shows the proportion of homes that provided full-time or part-time care to each age group.

Figure 13. Homes Providing Full-Time or Part-Time Care by Age Group, 2004



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Family Homes

Figure 14 shows the distribution of children in family homes by age group and part-time or full-time status, with children in kindergarten categorized separately. The distributions of children by age group for family homes and centers are similar (compare Figures 10 and 14). As in centers, the smallest category was part-time infants and the largest group of children was preschoolers in full-time care. There are differences, however, with only 31 percent of all children in licensed family care attending school (including kindergarten) as compared to 41 percent of children in centers. Almost two out of every three children in licensed family homes are either toddlers or preschoolers (63 percent) in contrast to somewhat more than half for children attending centers (55 percent).

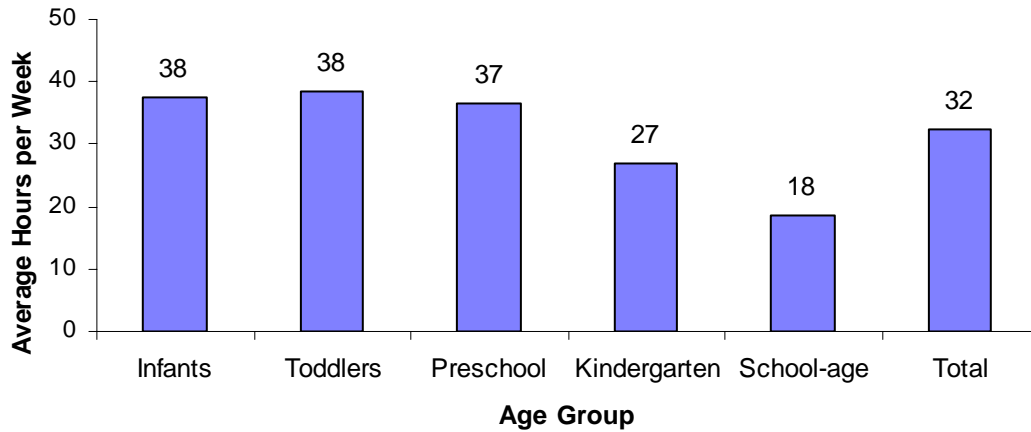


Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Family Homes

Two percent of licensed family homes only served school-age children in first grade or higher. The vast majority (71 percent) served both full-time and part-time children and 22 percent only served full-time children.

The average number of hours per week in care by age category presented in Figure 15 is unchanged from 2002. Children in family homes spent an average of 32 hours per week in child care. Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers spent the most time in care. School-age children beyond the age of kindergarten spent the least time in care (18 hours per week on average).

Figure 15. Average Hours per Week in Family Home Care by Age Group, 2004



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Family Homes

The estimated populations of children in licensed family homes, by region, age group, and time-in-care are presented in Table 12. School-age children (including kindergarteners), because of their need for before- and after-school care, were most likely to receive part-time care. Indeed, they accounted for almost 60 percent of the total part-time population in family homes.

Table 12. Estimated Licensed Family Home Child Care Populations by Age and Region, 2004

Full-Time Population Estimate^[1]

Age Group	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	All
Infant	410	470	380	510	210	390	2,360
Toddler	1,100	1,270	1,140	1,510	820	1,080	6,920
Preschool	2,450	2,510	2,190	3,240	2,070	2,550	15,020
Kindergarten	370	340	390	340	250	440	2,120
School-age ^[2]	250	390	310	120	190	190	1,440
Total	4,570	4,980	4,420	5,710	3,540	4,640	27,860

Part-Time Population Estimate^[1]

Age Group	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	All
Infant	110	130	140	140	140	140	800
Toddler	270	180	320	490	400	300	1,960
Preschool	730	490	1,040	1,300	710	1,120	5,400
Kindergarten	480	350	390	350	300	510	2,380
School-age ^[2]	1,100	1,160	1,270	1,710	1,570	1,770	8,580
Total	2,690	2,310	3,160	3,990	3,130	3,850	19,120

^[1] Children in sample multiplied by a county weighting factor to estimate population. Full-time is defined as thirty or more hours per week.

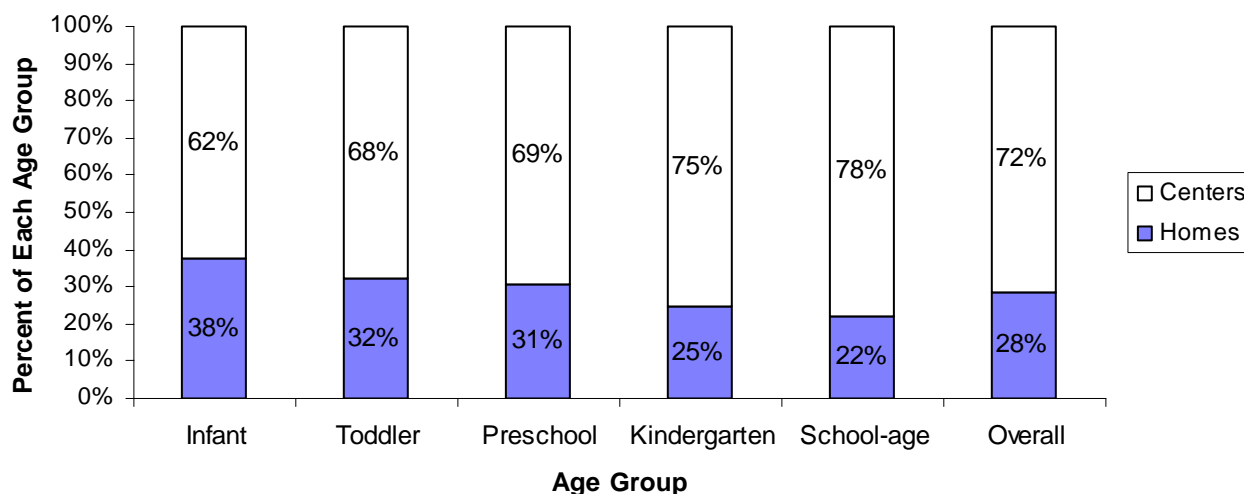
^[2] Survey was conducted during the school year. School-age children in part-time care may switch to full-time care in the summer.

Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Family Homes

Specialization in the Child Care Market

The age distribution and hours in care for children in licensed homes appear similar to those attending child care centers. But closer examination reveals some interesting differences. While children of all ages in licensed care were more likely to attend child care centers than family homes, the age of the child was related to the type of licensed provider used. Compared to older children, younger children (particularly infants) were more likely to go to family homes (see Figure 16). While 28 percent of all children in licensed care at the time of the 2004 surveys went to family home providers, 38 percent of infants in licensed care went to family homes.

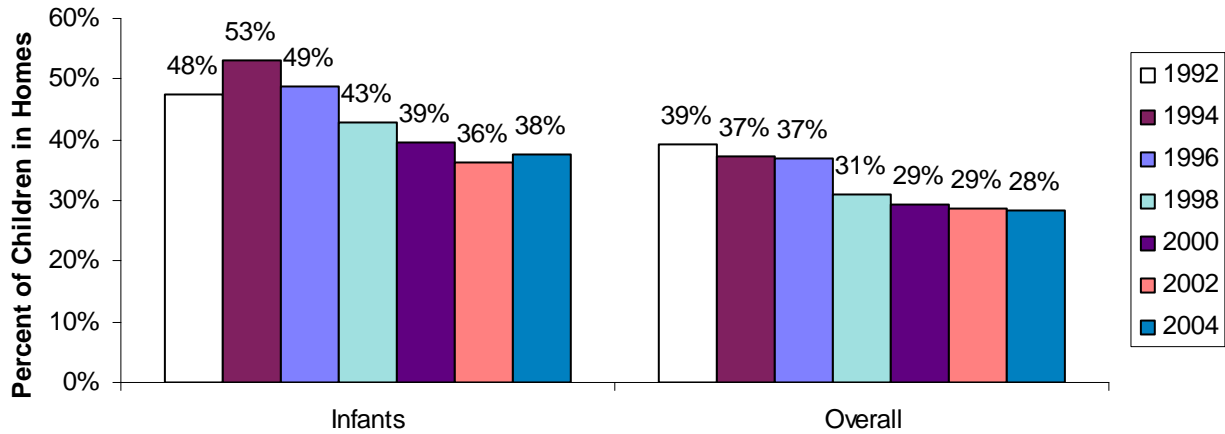
Figure 16. Enrollment of Children in Licensed Home Care versus Child Care Centers, 2004



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers and Family Homes

Shift in Attendance of Children in Licensed Care from Homes to Centers

Over the twelve years 1992 to 2004, the number of children that attended child care centers generally increased (see Figure 4), while the number in licensed family homes has declined for the past ten years, 1994 to 2004 (see Figure 11). As a consequence, the proportion of children in licensed care that attend licensed family homes has declined from 39 percent in 1992 to 28 percent in 2004. The decline in the proportion of infants in licensed care that went to family homes is particularly striking. In 1994 over half of all infants in licensed care were cared for in family homes; in 2004 only 38 percent of all infants in licensed care were in family homes.

Figure 17. Proportion of Children in Licensed Care Attending Family Homes, 1992-2004

Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers and Family Homes

Urban/Rural Differences

One reason for a parent to send their child to a family home provider rather than a child care center is the availability of care. It was expected that licensed care in child care centers would be less available in rural areas than in more urbanized areas. The thirty-nine counties in Washington State were categorized according to how many people live in cities of 10,000 or more. Counties with more than 100,000 people in cities of 10,000 or more were categorized as Metropolitan, counties with more than 40,000 people in cities of 10,000 or more were called Small Urban, and the remaining counties were classed as Rural. (Population estimates from Table 4 in OFM's *2004 Population Trends for Washington State, 2004*.)

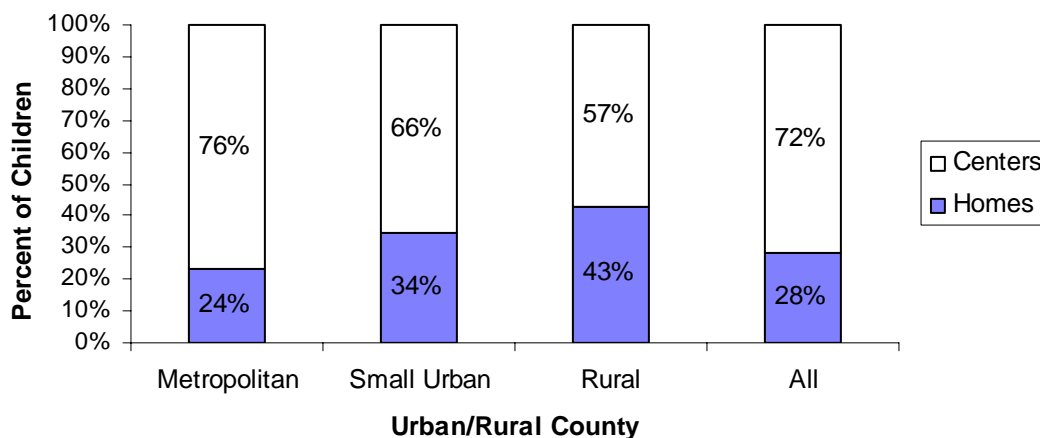
Table 13. Counties by Degree of Urbanization

Metropolitan	Small Urban	Rural		
Clark	Benton	Adams	Grays Harbor	Pend Oreille
King	Cowlitz	Asotin	Island	San Juan
Pierce	Kitsap	Chelan	Jefferson	Skamania
Snohomish	Skagit	Clallam	Kittitas	Stevens
Spokane	Thurston	Columbia	Klickitat	Wahkiakum
	Whatcom	Douglas	Lewis	Walla Walla
	Yakima	Ferry	Lincoln	Whitman
		Franklin	Mason	
		Garfield	Okanogan	
		Grant	Pacific	

Using this rough division of counties according to their degree of urbanization, we see that the more rural the county the higher the proportion of children in licensed care that went to family homes rather than child care centers in 2004. Only 24 percent of children in licensed care in the five most urbanized counties in Washington State went to family homes, while 43 percent of

children in licensed care in the 27 counties classified as rural went to family homes (see Figure 18).

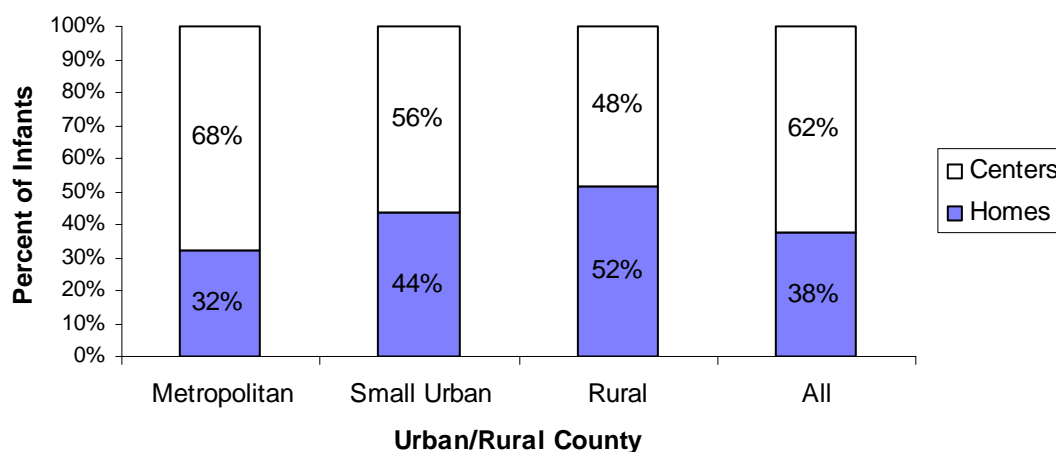
Figure 18. Distribution of Children in Licensed Care by Degree of Urbanization, 2004



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers and Family Homes

As shown in Figure 16, the younger the age of the child in licensed care, the more likely they were to go to a family home rather than a child care center. In addition, the more the rural the county, the more likely a child in licensed care was to attend a family home rather than a child care center. As a consequence of these two trends, 52 percent of the infants in licensed care in rural counties went to family homes rather than child care centers (see Figure 19). This is up slightly from 46 percent in 2002, but down from 1998 when 58 percent of infants in licensed care in rural counties went to family homes.

Figure 19. Distribution of Infants in Licensed Care by Degree of Urbanization, 2004

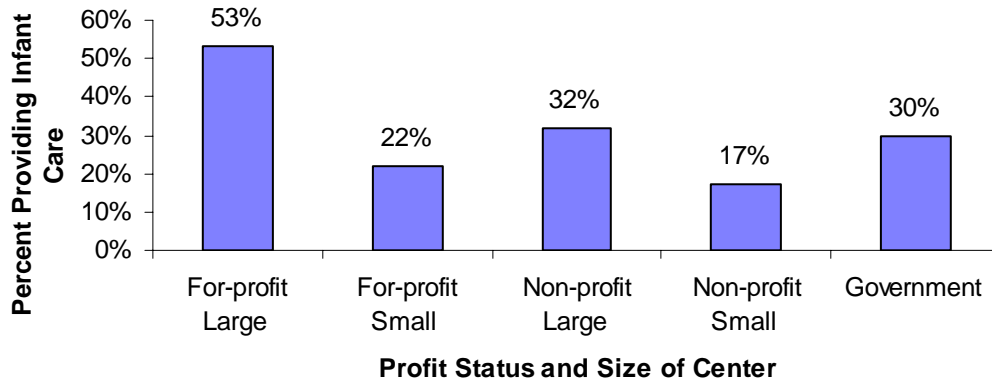


Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers and Family Homes

Type of Center and Specialization

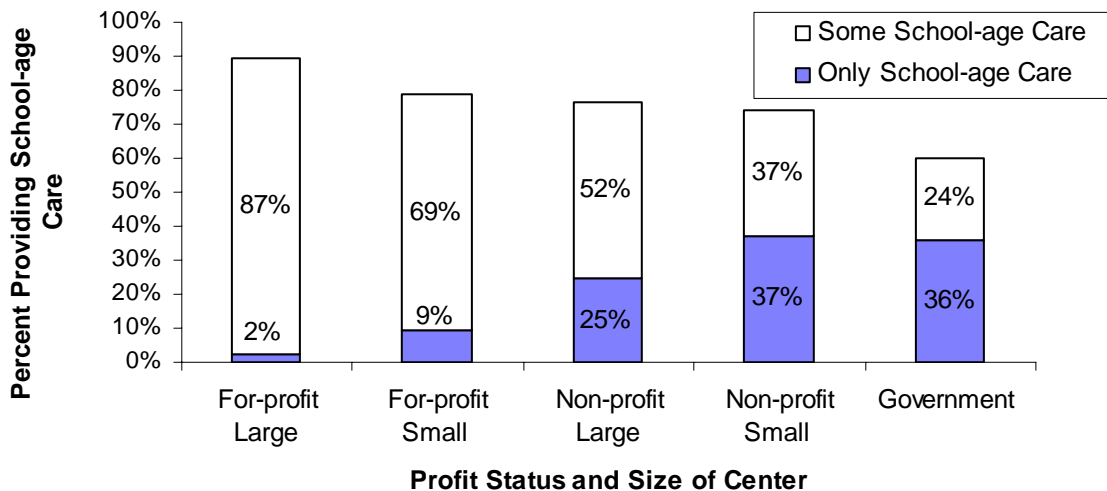
Focusing on child care centers, differences in the profit status of centers and specialization in the provision of child care were examined. Centers were classified as either non-profit, for-profit, or government centers. (Government centers include Tribal Centers and many programs at K-12 schools and colleges.) In addition, centers with a capacity of sixty or more were distinguished from smaller centers. While almost all centers served toddlers and preschoolers, there was evidence of specialization in the provision of care for very young and school-age children. For-profit centers with a capacity of sixty or more were the centers most likely to provide care for infants (see Figure 20). Large for-profit child care centers were also the most likely to provide care for school-age children, but a high proportion of government and small non-profit centers specialized in school-age care (see Figure 21).

Figure 20. Child Care Centers' Profit Status and Infant Care, 2004



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Child Care Centers

Figure 21. Child Care Centers' Profit Status and School-Age Care, 2004



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Survey of Child Care Centers

Availability and Use of Child Care

Capacity and Vacancies for Licensed Child Care

In order to understand the overall availability of licensed child care in Washington State, the information on child care centers and family home providers was combined. In that context, the decline in the number of children in licensed family homes in the ten years from 1994 to 2004 was offset by an increase in the number of children attending child care centers. The total number of children in licensed care has been fairly stable from 1998 to 2004 (see Figure 3).

The vacancy rate indicates how much difficulty families may experience in trying to find licensed care for their children. Between 1996 and 1998 the vacancy rate declined, suggesting an increasing tightness in the child care market. The vacancy rate has risen since then, reaching a ten-year high of 17 percent in 2004. Table 14 presents the vacancy rates in the licensed child care market from 1994 through 2004.

Table 14. Vacancy Rate for Licensed Child Care in Washington State, 1994-2004

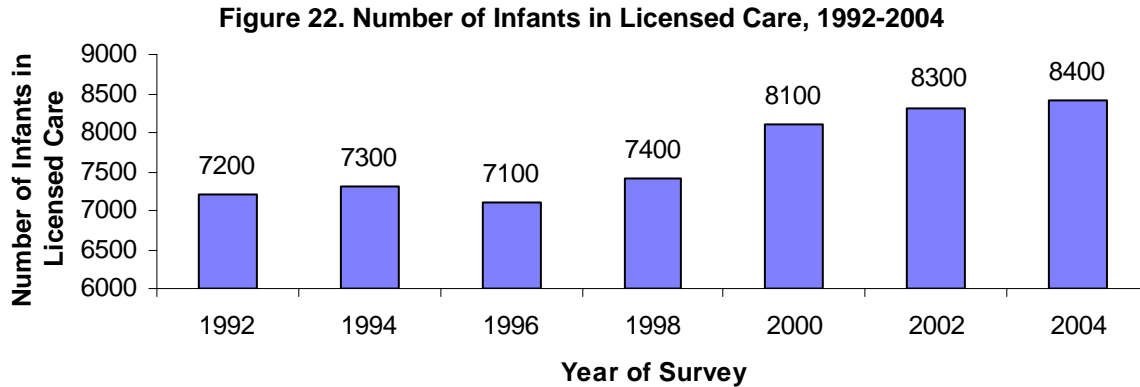
	<u>1994</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>2004</u>
Vacancy Rate						
Centers	13%	16%	12%	13%	14%	16%
Family Homes	16%	14%	14%	16%	19%	20%
All Licensed Facilities	14%	15%	13%	14%	16%	17%

Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers and Family Homes

Vacancies for Very Young Children

The number of infants served in licensed care has increased from 1996 to 2004 (see Figure 22 on the next page). Most of that change was due to an increase in the number of infants in center care.

Until July 1999 single parents of infants under one year old were exempt from TANF regulations requiring participation in work-related activities. After that time, only single parents with children under three months old were exempt from participation requirements. An examination of the payments made for child care by DSHS indicates that the number of infants in TANF families using subsidized licensed care was stable between 1998 and 2003. On the other hand, the number of infants in non-TANF low-income families that received subsidized child care in a licensed setting increased by over 1,300 between 1998 and 2003, a rise of 90 percent. Over this period the number of births in Washington State has been fairly constant.



Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
1992, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002 and 2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers and Family Homes

While the number of infants in licensed care has grown, still only 36 percent of centers and family homes cared for infants in 2004. Similarly, the proportion of facilities with infant vacancies was low. While 78 percent of all centers had vacancies, only 19 percent of centers had vacancies for infants (see Figure 8 earlier in this chapter). In family homes, 54 percent had vacancies and 36 percent had vacancies for children under two (see Figure 12 earlier in this chapter.)

If the availability of infant slots is inadequate, then the vacancy rate for infants should be lower than that for other age groups. In fact, as Table 15 shows, the center vacancy rate for infants of 18.2 percent was slightly higher than the overall vacancy rate for children (16 percent, see Table 14) and the home vacancy rate of 35.7 percent for children under two was much greater than that for children overall (20 percent, see Table 12). The vacancy rates for young children were greater than those reported from the 2000 child care surveys and quite close to those reported in 2002. Anecdotal accounts, however, continue to indicate that parents continue to have difficulty finding licensed care for very young children.

Table 15. Vacancies for Very Young Children in Centers and Family Homes, 2004

	<u>Number Served</u>	<u>Number of Vacancies</u>	<u>Estimated Vacancy Rate*</u>
Centers			
Infants (under 1 year old)	5,247	1,171	18.2%
Toddlers (1 to under 2.5 years old)	18,578	3,678	16.5%
Licensed Family Homes			
Infants (under 1 year old)	3,158		
Children 1 to under 2 years old	5,110		
Children 2 years old and younger	8,267	4,591	35.7%

* Vacancy rate is estimated by dividing the number of vacancies by the sum of the number of children served and the number of vacancies.

Source: DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning
2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers and Family Homes

Age Differences of Children in Licensed Care

A child's age is a strong predictor of whether or not he or she is in licensed care. According to the child care surveys, approximately 165,686 children received licensed child care in the spring of 2004 (see Column (C) in Table 16). The Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimated that there were about 1,079,081 children under 13 years old living in Washington State at that time (see Column (A) in Table 16). By combining the OFM data with the child care survey data we estimate that 15 percent of all children under age 13 were in licensed care in the spring of 2004 (165,686 / 1,079,081).

Table 16 combines OFM and child care survey data to make estimates of the percent of children of various ages that were in licensed care. Column (E) in Table 16 presents estimates of the percent of children in each age category that were in licensed care. Over one-quarter of all children of preschool age (between 2½ and 5½) were in licensed care, a higher proportion than that for any other age group. Preschoolers also were a large component of the children in licensed care, comprising 40 percent of all children in licensed care (see Column (D) in Table 16). While a slightly lower proportion of all children in licensed care were school-age (38 percent, Column (D)), only 10 percent of all school-age children under 13 were in licensed care (see Column (E)). Infants were also unlikely to be in licensed care, with only 10 percent of infants in licensed care (see Column (E)).

[Note: The preschool population in Table 16 includes all children 2½ through 5½ years of age. Children must be five by the start of the school year in September to enroll in kindergarten; therefore, approximately half of all five year olds at the time of the child care survey in early 2004 were not eligible to enroll in kindergarten in the fall of 2003. Table 16 includes half of all five year olds in the preschool category and half of estimated five year olds in the school-age age category.]

Table 16. All Children in Washington State Compared to Children in Licensed Care

Age Group	(A) OFM Estimate of Number in Age Group [1]	(B) Percent of Children Under 13 in Age Group	(C) Estimated Number of Children in Licensed Care [2]	(D) Age Group as Percent of All Children in Licensed Care	(E) Percent of Age Group in Licensed Care
Infants	80,232	7%	8,405	5%	10%
Toddlers	120,347	11%	27,458	17%	23%
Preschool ^[3]	241,627	22%	66,492	40%	28%
School-age	636,875	59%	63,332	38%	10%
Total (<13)	1,079,081	100%	165,686	100%	15%

[1] Based on estimates of 2004 populations by OFM (Governor's Office of Financial Management).

[2] From 2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers and Family Homes.

[3] Preschool includes children ages 2.5-5.5.

A convenient statistic for comparing availability of licensed care among different regions of the state is the number of licensed slots per 100 children. In 2004, about 1,079,081 children under the age of 13 lived in Washington State. The total licensed capacity of centers and homes was 183,400. So, there were 17 licensed slots in the state for every 100 children under 13 years old (see Table 17).

Among the DSHS Regions, availability ranged from 14 slots per 100 children in Regions 3 and 5 to 20 slots per 100 children in Regions 1 and 2 (Table 17). Availability varied widely among counties—from under 7 slots per 100 children under 13 in Ferry, Garfield, Pend Oreille and Stevens, to 20 or more slots per 100 children in Chelan, Douglas, Franklin, Skagit, Spokane, Thurston, Whitman, and Yakima (see Table A3 and Map B4 in the Appendices). Differences in availability among Regions or counties can be attributed to many factors. Among them are differences in profitability, in the value parents placed on licensed child care, in the availability of safe alternatives to licensed care, and in the ability of the state to recruit and license providers.

Slightly over 60 percent of children in licensed care are not yet in school, and a separate estimate was made of the proportion of licensed slots available for those children. It was assumed that the proportion of slots available to non school-age children at a given home or child care center could be estimated by the proportion of children served who were non school-age. Using this strategy, it was estimated that Washington State had 26 licensed child care slots for every 100 children not yet enrolled in school.

Table 17. Regional Variation in Availability of Child Care, 2004

Region	<----- Children Under 13 ----->			<----- Non School-age Children ----->		
	Children 0-12 ^[1]	Licensed Slots ^[2]	Slots per 100 Children	Children 0-5.5 ^[1]	Licensed Slots ^[2]	Slots per 100 Children
1	143,600	28,700	20	58,000	16,600	29
2	109,600	21,600	20	46,000	14,100	31
3	184,400	26,600	14	74,900	16,100	21
4	277,300	52,900	19	115,900	34,100	29
5	181,700	26,200	14	74,000	15,900	21
6	182,500	27,500	15	73,600	16,600	23
Total	1,079,100	183,400	17	442,200	113,300	26

[1] Based on 2004 population estimates by Office of Financial Management. The numbers for 0 - 5.5 includes all children 0-4 and one-tenth of the population estimate for the 5-9 age category.

[2] From 2004 Surveys of Child Care Centers and Family Homes. The estimates for non-school-age slots assumes that the proportion of slots available to non-school-age children is the same as their representation in the child care population in the center or home.

